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'Α Γ Α' Π Η,  
OR THE  
**Feast of Love,**  
A *Single*  
**SERMON**  
AT THE  
OXFORD-SHIRE FEAST,  
Kept on Thursday Nov. 25. 1675.  
at *Drapers-Hall* in LONDON.

PREACHED  
At S<sup>t</sup> Michael's Church in Cornhill.

By FRANCIS GREGORY, D.D.  
Rector of *Hambleton* in the County of *Bedford*  
and Chaplain in Ordinary to His  
SACRED MAJESTY.

LONDON,  
Printed by *J. Macock*, for *Richard Roylston*,  
Bookseller to His Sacred Majesty, 1675.

И П А Т А  
О Т Л О  
1830

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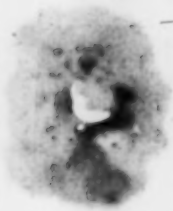
# Imprimatur,

Ex Aedibus Lamberb,  
Decemb. 16. 1675.

*Antonius Saunders.*

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St. James's Church in



164

# To my Dear Country-men, and Wor- thy Citizens of L O N D O N ;

Richard Wise.  
Peter Nash.  
Richard Bourne.  
John Sea.  
Thomas Whiteing.  
Charles Pinfold.  
Robert Biggs.

George Clisby.  
Abraham Story.  
William Whitehill.  
Robert Applegate.  
William Goodwin.  
Benjamin Barnes.

Stewards of the Oxford-shire Feast.

Gentlemen,

**H**AVING so far condescended to Tour first desires,  
as to Compose and Preach this Sermon, I thought  
fit to Gratifie your second Request in Printing it  
too. The Penning of this Discourse (such as it  
is) was the work of several days; the Preaching of this  
Sermon cost me a Journey of several miles, but the Print-  
ing thereof will stand me in no more than an easie compli-  
ance with Tour desires: Wherefore since you are pleased to  
esteem your selves somewhat gratified by my readines to  
do the harder part of this service, I thought it imprudence  
to disoblige any Person amongst You, by refusing to do that  
other part, which will be done with so much facility.

But the truth is, I have another design, and that a Cha-  
ritable one too, in the Publication of this Discourse: I  
need not tell you, that many of our Countrymen, who are  
Persons of fair Estates, and in a Capacity of being more  
bountiful to the Poor, than most of us who met together,  
were detained from our Feast by the importunity of their  
other Affairs. The absence of such Persons, as it ren-  
dered our Meeting the less conspicuous, so did it make our  
Collection the less Magnificent.

Peradventure the putting of this Discourse into these

A 2

Men's

Men's hands, may at once open their hearts and purses too; and excite their Charity to such a degree, that they may Contribute towards our Poor somewhat more in private, than they would have done in publick. For although Publick Acts of Charity, especially if considerable and great, do become exemplary; yet through that hypocrisie, which lieth deep in the heart of Man, they are attended with this great inconvenience, that they alone are exposed to the danger of ostentation, which every good Man fears, lest it corrupt the beauty, and alter the nature of his Charity, and render it a Sacrifice rather to himself than to his Maker.

However, if you please to convey one of these Discourses into the hands of such Gentlemen, who had an Invitation to our Feast, and would have come but could not: the very Title Page at first view will mind them of their Country and Duty too. And probably they will not think their Charity so far excused by their absence from our Feast, as to contribute nothing to the Poor Man's Bason, nor pay some few mites at least for the laying of their Trenchers.

And although such a presenting of small Books to Persons of Quality, hath ever been esteemed a kind of begging; yet 'tis the most Gentile and Ingenuous way of doing so, and if it be but tolerable in any other case, 'tis highly commendable in this. Remember who they are for whom we beg; the Poor Orphan, who perhaps, if we do it not for him now, must beg for himself for ever. And if there be any imputation and dishonour in this begging of Ours, being only designed to prevent that of other persons, and perhaps whole Families too, let it all be Charged, and Rest upon

Your Friend and Servant

'Ev Kuew,

FRANCIS GREGORY.



## J U D E 12.

*These are spots in your Feasts of Charity—*

**T**HE Persons Censured in the Text were the *Gnosticks*; those cursed Disciples, and Viperous Brood of that Early and Infamous Heretick *Carpocrates*; A Man, saith *Tertulian*, that was, *pariter Magus, pariter Fornicarius*, both a Conjuror and a Fornicator; he had not so much brains as to set off and credit his Heresie with so much as a disguise and pretence of Sanctimony. *Eusebius* styles him, *ἡν ὁ πατήρ τῶν γνῶστικῶν*, the Father of the *Gnosticks*; and *Irenaeus* tells us, that his Children were very like him. So Heterodox and Erroneous in their Opinions, so Vicious and Vile in their Practices, that their Converse was a great disparagement to every Christian, that was Regular in his Life, and sound in his Faith.

Such Monsters of Men they were, that even the Spirit of God Himself, though he be like a Dove that hath no Gall, doth notwithstanding fix upon them several brands of dishonour: By the guidance of this Blessed Spirit, St. Peter calleth them *μῆκος, blemishes*; and St. Jude in the Text *οὐκ ἰσχύουσιν, spots*; what's that? *Christianism*

B

Tertul. de anima, c. 32.

Euseb. Hist. l. 2.

Iren. adv. Har. l. 1. c. 24.

1 Pet. 2. 12.

Geot. in 3  
Pet. 2. 13.

*nisi dedecora*, saith *Grotius*, the common Reproaches of the Christian Faith, which had now gained much Credit in the World. And as their Society was such a disparagement to the Servants of Christ at all times and in all places; so more especially in their Publick Meetings and Solemn Assemblies; and particularly, in *tais 'Agais*, in their Feasts of Charity, where they fed like Beasts, and talked like Pagans.

Concerning which Feasts of Charity, Three things may be considered, 1. Their Antiquity. 2. The circumstances of their Celebration. 3. Their Design and End.

Blast. Synt.  
p. 18.

Concil.  
Gang.  
Aug. adv.  
Faust. l. 20.  
c. 20.

Chry. 1 Cor.  
11. Hom. 27.  
p. 417.

Tert. Apol.  
c. 39.

1. Consider we the Antiquity of these Feasts, and that must needs be great: *Blasaris* styles them *'Agais* *100*, an old Usage; and *Zonaras* tells us, *101* if *Was 'Agais*, the Christians kept up these Feasts from an Ancient Custom: They are mentioned by *St. Augustine*, in *Agapibus nostris*, &c. They are mentioned by *St. Chrysostom*, *102* *103* *104* *105* *106* *107* *108* *109* *110* *111* *112* *113* *114* *115* *116* *117* *118* *119* *120* *121* *122* *123* *124* *125* *126* *127* *128* *129* *130* *131* *132* *133* *134* *135* *136* *137* *138* *139* *140* *141* *142* *143* *144* *145* *146* *147* *148* *149* *150* *151* *152* *153* *154* *155* *156* *157* *158* *159* *160* *161* *162* *163* *164* *165* *166* *167* *168* *169* *170* *171* *172* *173* *174* *175* *176* *177* *178* *179* *180* *181* *182* *183* *184* *185* *186* *187* *188* *189* *190* *191* *192* *193* *194* *195* *196* *197* *198* *199* *200* *201* *202* *203* *204* *205* *206* *207* *208* *209* *210* *211* *212* *213* *214* *215* *216* *217* *218* *219* *220* *221* *222* *223* *224* *225* *226* *227* *228* *229* *230* *231* *232* *233* *234* *235* *236* *237* *238* *239* *240* *241* *242* *243* *244* *245* *246* *247* *248* *249* *250* *251* *252* *253* *254* *255* *256* *257* *258* *259* *260* *261* 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## (3)

2. Consider we the Circumstances of their Celebration; and they are Three, 1. the Time when, 2. the Place where, 3. the Manner how.

1. Consider we the Time of their Celebration----And as to this, that Account, which *Pliny* gave the Emperour *Trajan*, doth afford us some general Information, *soliti sunt stato die convenire, &c.* The Christians are wont to Meet and Feast on a certain set and appointed day; *St. Chrysostom* confirms it, *in quibus mensuramus, &c.* They spread their Table upon Solemn and wonted dayes; such dayes, in which the Eucharist was Celebrated; so *Gratian*, *Ex Conviviis claudi solebant sacramento Dominica Passionis, &c.* These Feasts of Love were wont to conclude and end with another more Sacred Feast, that of the Sacrament.

*Plin lib. 10.  
Epist. 97.*

*Chrysost.  
1 Cor. 11.  
Hom. 27. p.  
417.*

*Grat. 2. Pet.  
2. 13.*

Thus probably might it be at first; but because several disorders did afterwards happen, which *St. Paul* complains of in the Church of *Corinth*; such disorders, as did render the guilty persons unfit for the Holy Communion; it was Decreed in process of Time, that the Communion should be received fasting, and these Feasts of Charity adjourned till the Sacrament was over: So *St. Chrysostom* tells us, *Μετά τῆς ἁγίας κοινῆς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμεῖς ἐσθίωμεν, all the Congregation, which received the Sacrament, did afterwards go and eat together.*

*Chrysost.  
1 Cor. 11.  
Hom. 27. p.  
417.*

And so constant was this Custom for several Ages, that *Justellus* makes this Feast of Charity an Appendix, or part of the Eucharist; for so he tells us, *Cena Dominica tris olim erant*

*Justel in  
Cod. Can.  
Ecl. v.  
p. 80.*

*Partes; The Lords Supper did of old consist of three parts;*

1. Ἀγία κλάσις, the breaking of bread; 2. Πόσιον τῆς εὐχαρίστας, the Cup of blessing: And then 3. Ἀγάπη, the Feast of Charity.

2. Consider we the place of their Celebration: I remember that *Pliny*, in his forenamed Account to the Roman Emperour, tells him thus, *Quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum Cibum; When the whole service of God was over, the Christians were wont to part asunder, and within a short space they met together again to eat; but in what place they met, he doth not there inform us.*

Plin. l. 10.  
Ep. 97.

But that these Feasts of Charity were of Old Celebrated in the Church, may well be guessed from that expression of St. Paul, *What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God?* There were some amongst them so disorderly at this Feast, that although it were called a Feast of Charity, yet since it was no better managed, he sharply re-proves them for keeping it in the House of God.

And that they kept it there indeed, we have not only a probable conjecture from this Text, but the express Testimony of Creditable Authors; *Epulas in Ecclesia faciebant*, saith St. Hieron, *they made a Banquet in the Church:* So much is intimated by the Canons of several Councils, which afterwards forbad this Practice; so did the Council of *Laodicea*, *Ὅπου δὲ ἐστὶν*

Hieron.  
2 Cor. 11.

Conc. Laod.  
Can. 28.

ταῦτα

τοῖς κυριακοῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τὰς λεγομένας Ἀγάπαις  
 ποιῆν, &c. And so the sixth General Council, Conc. Trid.  
 Can. 74.  
 'Οὐ δὴ τὸν αὐτὸν οἶον ποιεῖν ἑγχεῖς οἶον, ἢ ἐν αὐτῇ  
 τὰς λεγομένας Ἀγάπας τελεῖν, &c. 'Tis not fit, nor  
 shall it hereafter be lawfull to Celebrate these  
 Feasts of Charity in the House of God, as if  
 that were a place but Common. Certainly  
 these Canons, which do expressly forbid this  
 Feasting in the Church, do necessarily suppose  
 it; because these Laws were established, not  
 to prevent an inconvenience, that hereafter  
 might be, but to remove a profanation, which  
 already was.

3. Consider we the Manner of their Cele-  
 bration; and that comprehends in it these Three  
 Particulars:

1. The nature and kind of their Provision;  
 and that was but ordinary, not delicate in its  
 Quality, nor over-much in its Quantity.

So have some observed from that of the E-  
 vangelist, *They continuing daily in the Tem-  
 ple, and breaking Bread*; which expression some  
 understand of the Sacrament, but others of this  
 Feast of Charity, which is here stiled, a break-  
 ing of bread; to intimate, as *Oecumenius* words  
 it, τὸ ἰσχυρὸν ἢ ἀντιφάσιον τῆς διαίτης, or, as St.  
*Chrysostom* phraseth it, τὰς ἐκκλησίαν βίον, the fr-  
 gality of their meal, and the means of their Pro-  
 vision. Ad. 1. 46.  
 Oecum. in  
 loc.  
 Chrys. in  
 loc.

But whether this Text doth prove it such or  
 not, the Testimony of several Authors doth;  
*Tertullian* calls these Feasts, *Cenulas nostras*, Test. Apol.  
 c. 39.  
*our mean or little Suppers*; so mean, that he  
 stiles

Cappel. in  
1 Cor. 11.

Calv. 1 Cor.  
11.

Balf. Cont.  
Gang. c. 11.

Aug. cont.  
Faustum l.  
20. c. 20.

stiles them again, *frugalitatis exempla*, examples of frugality. Cappelus calls them, *Cenas frugales & parcissimas*; Thrifty and slender Suppers; and Calvin testifieth for them thus, *Erat illic summa frugalitas & moderatio*; there was used the greatest frugality and moderation that could be. And what were the usual Messes at these Feasts? Balsamon tells us, *ἄρα μὲν ἐστὶν ἄρτος, ἡ μικρὰ ῥοφή, ἡ ἀκροβόλου, ἡ ἀκροβόλου, ἡ ἀκροβόλου*, a little bread and fruits; To which St. Austin adds yet another Dish, *Pauperibus etiam carnes erogantur*; there was some flesh also provided for the Poor.

2. Their Temperance and Sobriety in the use of Meats and Drinks; and perhaps it might be their Piety and Prudence to provide for themselves such fare, as was but mean and course, with this very design, That no Man amongst them might have so much as a temptation to the least excess. But whatever their Provision was, 'tis sure, there was but here and there an untoward person, that did abuse it; 'tis not probable, that any Man in his Wits, that was just now preparing for, or newly returned from the Holy Sacrament would so quickly forget himself and his Vowes, as that he should immediately degenerate from a serious Christian into a luxurious and wanton Epicure. No, St. Chrysostom and Oecumenius give us this Testimony of them, *τρώγῃς μετὰ μέτρον, ἢ ὑπερβαίνουσιν*, They eat, but did not Gluttonize: *Editur quantum esurientes capiunt; bibitur quantum pudicis utile*, saith Tertullian; They eat no more than hunger required; and they

Chrysost. &  
Oecum. in  
Act. 2. 42.  
47.

Tert. Apol.  
c. 39.

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they drunk no more than Chastity would well permit. But,

3. The nature of their Discourse and Table-talk; and what that was *Tertullian* tells us, *Tertul. ib.*  
*Ita fabulantur, ut qui scient Dominum audire, &c. Their language was such, as became those Persons, who believed that God did bear them; as their teeth were sparing, so were their tongues chaste too: Nihil vilitatis, nihil immodestie, Not an immodest word, not one wanton syllable; no drolling at Sacred Things, or Holy Persons: No, that's the dirty language of this Age, wherein some beastly persons, who invite us to their Tables, do entertain their Guests with such unfavoury Discourse, as doth not onely grate and foul the ear, but even turn the stomach too.*

3. Consider we the Design and End of their Celebration; and what that was, we may see distinctly in these Three Particulars:

1. The First and Principal design of these Feasts in the Text, was the Glory of God, that bountifull God, who furnished their Table for them.

'Tis St. Paul's Command, *Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the Glory of God: the Primitive Christians did so; thus the Evangelist, They continuing in the Temple, breaking bread, and praising God, &c. Thus it continued in Tertullian's time, who tells us, Non prius discumbitur, quam Oratio ad Deum praeissetur; We sit not down, till first we have prayed: and when their Meal was over, Oratio convivium dirimit,*

1 Cor. 10.

31.

Ach 1. 46

47.

Tert. Apol.

c. 39.



*dirimit*, saith the same *Tertullian*, *They prayed again, and so departed*; a practice, which condemns the Atheists of these Times, who fall to their meat, as the Hog doth to his Acorns, without the least respect to the kind Oak from which they fall.

2. The second design of these Feasts was to beget, betwixt Christian and Christian, a mutual correspondence, acquaintance and friendship, where as yet it was not; and to confirm and increase it, where it already was.

*Tertul. ubi  
supra.*

The very name of these Feasts imports as much, *Cæna nostra de nomine rationem sui ostendit*, saith *Tertullian*, *Our Suppers give an account of their Institution by their name*, and that's 'Αγάπη, *Feasts of Love*; accordingly *St. Austin* renders the Text thus, *These are spots, in dilectionibus vestris, in your Loves*; intimating that the end of these Feasts was, as *Blasphar* words it, οἱ 'Αγάπης συνδυαί, *to knit Christians in Love*; upon which score *Balsamon* calleth these Suppers 'Αδελφότητες, *Fraternities* or *Brotherhoods*; and *Cappellus* stiles them, *Mutue charitatis contesserationes, the cements of mutual kindness*; as if their design of eating had been, not onely to incorporate their food into their bodies, but to assimilate and translate themselves into one anothers souls too.

*Blasph. Synt.  
p. 18.*

*Bals. Synt.  
Conc. Gan.  
Cap. 11.  
Cap. 1 Cor.  
22.*

3. The design of these Feasts was to extend and expresse their Love towards such Christians as were indigent and poor; the former being an act of common friendship, but this of proper Charity.

The



The Provision of these Feasts, whatever it were, was prepared by the Rich Men's Purfes; who did it *καὶ οὕτως ἀποδοῦναι τὸν πτωχόν*, saith *Balsamon*; from their Mercy and Compassion to the Poor: So speaks *Tertullian*, *Inopes refrigerio isto juvamus*, *Our Feast doth refresh the Indigent*: Nor did they suffer their poor Brethren to stand as Beggars at the door, but they freely admitted them to their Table; *καὶ οὕτως ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, saith *Zonaras*; the Poor were not then esteemed as Intruders, but invited as proper Guests. And hence *St. Chrysostom* calls their Board, *τὸ κοινὸν κενὸν*, a *Common Table*; and this Supper, *κοινὸν ἰουχίαν*, a *Common Banquet*; and so *Pliny*, *Cibum promiscuum, promiscuous food*; both Poor and Rich being intermingled at the same Table, and feeding on the self-same Dishes too.

Balf. Synt.  
Conc. Gan.  
C. 11.

Tert. Apol.  
c. 39.

Zon. Conc.  
Laod. Can.  
37.

Chry. 1 Cor.  
11. Hom. 27.

Plin. Epist.  
ad Trajanum.

The Historical Account of these Feasts in the Text being thus dispatcht, the Practical Part, which is of present concern to this Assembly, doth now succeed. That there is a Feast this day intended, I need not tell you; Only my request is, That the Feast of this time may prove like the Feast in this Text; an *Ἀγάπη*, a *Feast of Charity* indeed. And that it may be really such, we are obliged to imitate the laudable Example of the Primitive Christians, and to do at our Feast, at least in some proportion, what they did at Theirs. And here give me leave to recommend to your Practice these Three Particulars:

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1. Let

r. Let us, in this intended Feast of Ours, imitate, I will not say, the Frugality, but the Sobriety and Temperance of Theirs.

True it is, we are not obliged to feed upon a little Bread or Fruits, as they did; for, whether the courtesie of their Provision did arise from necessity and want of better, or else from their own Election and Choice, we cannot tell; but this we know, so bountiful is our God, that he did never restrain either Them or Us from the sober use of his choicest Creatures. But although our indulgent Father do give us that Liberty, which our elder Brethren did either want, or would not use, as to the Quality of our Food; yet we have no permission to be Gluttons or Drunkards more than They.

We may sometimes, upon good occasions, please our Palates, and gratifie our Taste; God is pleased now and then to allow us, not only the bare nourishment, but even the pleasure of His Creatures; but withall, we must never indulge our flesh so far, nor pamper it so high, as to render that the Governess of our Spirit, which should and must be under its command. St. Hieron saith well in this Case, *That whosoever eats too little, Givem enecat, be serves a dear Citizen, (i. e.) his own body; but whosoever eats and drinks too much, Hostem nutrit, be nourisheth an Enemy; the only Enemy, which Christ would not have us feed, (i. e.) our sinful flesh.*

There are indeed, in this debauched Age of ours, a Generation of Men, that feed high, and drink

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drink deep, and that, as may well be guessed, with a design to nourish, not themselves, but their Vices; their end is to excite and quicken their lusts, and make themselves the more Gigantick, sturdy and able sinners: the full Table is only designed to prepare them the better for the Adulterous Bed. Poor silly Men! who deserve our just indignation, yet need our compassions too; Men, who with their own teeth dig themselves a way, not only to the Grave, but Hell; for, whereas other sinners do eat and drink damnation to themselves at God's Table, these Men do it at their own.

And should there be any such Persons found in this Assembly, I must say as our Apostle doth, *These are spots in your Feasts of Charity*. Spots indeed, that deserve to be quite wiped off with shame, scorn, and just abhorrence; persons, that deserve to be excluded from all converse with men, and numbred amongst those silly beasts, who do best love, and most devour that very food, which fets them soonest, and prepares them quickest for the slaughter.

2. Let us, in this intended Feast of Ours, imitate the Primitive Christians in those Feasts of Theirs, as to the innocence of our Discourse and Table-talk.

What our Elder Brethren did in this matter, we have already seen, and what St. Paul commands in this Case, we cannot well be ignorant, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; save that which is good, Putrid, rotten language*. Pray, tell me, what should any thing,

Ephes. 4. 29.

C 2

that

*Tert. Apol.*  
c. 39.

that is corrupt and rotten, do at a Feast? Lin-  
nen, that's nasty; Trenchers, that are foul; a  
Dish, that's dirty; and Meat, that stinks, no  
man would away with: But alas, what's all  
this to the Guest of an unclean and wanton  
Tongue? There is no man's breath, that stinks  
like his: What *Tertullian* told the drunken Pa-  
gans, may we tell the scurrilous Christian, *Ru-*  
*stibus vestris Aer acefcit; He poisons the Air*  
*wherein he breaths, and taints the Room where-*  
*in he stands*: So noysom is the stench of un-  
savoury Discourses, that the *Grecians* were  
wont, as *Athenaus* observes, in the close of  
their Suppers, *σπίτον δι γλώσσας*, and *ε νεὶ βάλ-*  
*αν*, saith *Homer*; to perfume and burn the  
Tongues of their Sacrifices, thereby to expiate  
the extravagancies of their own. And to pre-  
vent, not only the scurrility, but even the im-  
pertinency of Table-talk. Some Pagans, whom  
*Plutarch* mentioneth, intending a solemn Invi-  
tation, gave their Friends a whole years warn-  
ing, that so the Guests might provide them-  
selves with matter for good Discourse, as well  
as the Entertainer prepare his Feast. And if  
the poor Heathens were thus solicitous and jea-  
lous of their Language, methinks the Chris-  
tian stands more obliged to be considerate and  
chaste in His.

3. Let us, in this intended Feast of Ours,  
imitate the Primitive Christians in those Feasts  
of Theirs, as to their Design and End; and  
that's double.

1. Let Our Feast be, as Theirs was, a Feast  
of

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of Mutual Love, Amity and Friendship. 'Tis St. Peter's Command, *Love as Brethren*; the Relation is Ours, and consequently the Duty is so too. We are Brethren by Common blood; as Men; by our common Nation, as *Englishmen*; and by our common Religion, as Christians: but if these General Considerations are not enough to oblige and endear us to one another, there is yet a more particular Relation that should engage us; We are Brethren as born in one and the same Shire; for, *Patria est communis Pater*, saith the Roman Oratour, *Our Country is our common Mother*; and that Country is Oxford too; for although we were not all born within that Cities Walls, yet we were within its Precincts and Neighbourhood.

And shall any Person, that ever breathed within or near to Oxford Air, prove unfriendly and unkind? The University is usually stiled, *Alma Mater*, the *Benign*, *Courteous*, and *Indulgent Mother*; so loving and tender-hearted, that methinks Her Example should reach, not her proper Children only, but even the remotest of her Neighbours too: She doth not allow the least Disputes, except it be those friendly ones within Her Schools; She clothes all her Sons, and many of her Citizens too, with the Gown, that Emblem of Peace; Her Pulpits preach this Lesson; and that blessed Bible, which She bears in her Scutcheon, doth require us to be kind and friendly; not to bite like Dogs and Serpents, not to push and gore like furious Bulls; but to bear one anothers burdens,

burdens, like that kinder Oxe, from whose courtesie, I had almost said, from whose Humanity, our Mother did at first receive, and still retains her Name.

Grot. a Pet.  
2. 13.

2. Let Our Feast be as Theirs was, a Feast of Charity to the Poor. What the Primitive Christians did, *Grotius* tells us, *Divites & Pauperes pari viâ utebantur*; there was the same Provision made for the Poor as for the Rich. But that's not all; as we should admit the meanest of our Country-men that are present this day, to our Table, so let us feed some absent ones at their own; let us relieve the one from our Trenchers, and the other from our Purses; and indeed amongst those many Dishes, that are provided for our selves, methinks there should be at least one Basen for the Poor; that so such as are at a distance from us, may feed upon our Bounty, though they do not taste our Feast. And here three things must be shewed;

1. What must be the just measure of our Charity?

2. Who must be the objects of our Charity?

3. What are the Motives to it?

1. What must be the just measure of our Charity? What must we give, and how much? We answer, there is no certain Rule to be prescribed to every particular person in this Case; but in General, we must proportion our Charity by this double Measure:

1. The first Measure of our Charity must be our own Ability; true it is, we should all be

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as Generous and Noble as they, whom St. Paul doth thus commend; *They were willing beyond their Power.* Our Soul should be larger than our Purse, our Charity should be bigger than our Alms; our Will should be above our Ability, but our Deed according to it: So 'tis required, *Let every one lay by in store, as God hath prospered him, &c.* Such was the practice of the Primitive Christians. *The Disciples determined to send relief unto the Brethren:* But how much was given by this and that particular Person? the Text saith, *Every man according to his Ability:* And thus it was in Tertullian's time, *Unusquisque stigem apponit, sicut magis possit, &c.* Every man gave more or less, as he was able. And the truth is, whosoever giveth less, than he is very well able, is uncharitable to his Neighbour; and whosoever giveth more is uncharitable to Himself and His.

2. The second Measure of our Charity must be our Brothers want: By this Rule did the Saints of old proportion their Charity too; *Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.* And here we should consider, not only the degree of our Neighbours want, but its occasion too: If a Man's Poverty do arise from his Idleness, Debauchery, and Vicious Courses, though our Charity must not let him starve in hopes of his Reformation; yet our Prudence, to make him Exemplary, may justly let him smart and pinch; but where a man's wants are sore, and occasioned either by



by the greatness of his charge, or any sad accidents that were inevitable; the expressions of our Charity, and the measure of his Relief must be proportionable to his need.

But why should I mention any Rules for the just Proportions of Charity in this Assembly? 'tis observed to the just Honour of the Citizens of *London*, That whatever good works they do, they do them Nobly. If a Citizen Found a School, probably he makes it like a College: If a Citizen builds an Alms-house, he doth it with such Magnificence, as if it were designed rather for a Prince than Beggars: If the City build a Church, with what splendour 'tis done, these very Walls, and this very Pulpit would speak aloud, even without a Preacher. Methinks the Old Churches of *London*, lately burnt, and newly Restored, are like some Antient Plate, melted down indeed, but so Artificially made up again, and so neatly burnish'd, that they are become more Glorious through the fire, and do only shine the brighter: So that whatever the City might lose by the late Conflagration, the Church, through their Magnificence, hath proved a Gainer. Wherefore, if any man demand what should be the Rule and Standard of your present Bounty, we answer, let it be your selves: What *St. Paul* once blamed in other Men, will be no fault in you, *Measuring themselves by themselves*, &c. Do but you this day consult your selves, your own bowels, your own estates, your own wonted generosity; do but give like Citizens of *London*,



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don, and then, with a due respect to the difference of your Estates, give meanly if you can: But,

2. Who must be the Objects of our Charity? give we must, but to whom? Doubtless we must not exclude from our Charity any Soul, that doth either deserve or need it; but since our Ability cannot reach to all the world, we may pick and chuse for our selves some such Objects, on whom our Charity will be best bestowed. And who were the special Objects of the Christians Charity in their Ancient Feasts, *Tertulian* tells us, *Pueris & Puellis re & Parentibus destitutis*, &c. *Boys, Girls, poor Orphans, that had neither Estates nor Friends.* And here, though I would by no means limit your Charity to such or such, yet I would particularly recommend Two sorts of Children to your Consideration.

*Tert. Apol. c. 39.*

1. Such poor Children deserve to be recommended to your Charity, as proper Objects indeed, who are like to make good Men and good Scholars too.

Should we but enquire from the Publick Schools of our own County, or from the Colleges and Halls in our own University, we should quickly hear of such and such Lads of slender Fortunes, but Vertuous Inclinations and Rich Endowments; industrious Youths, that would be at Work, but have no Tools; Children, that would be Scholars, but cannot, for want of a Tutour to instruct, Books to read, and perhaps bread to live.

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Doubtless,

Doubtless, there is scarce any greater object of Charity than such a Child as this ; a Child, that's Pregnant and Promising ; to train up such a Child as this in a course of Religion and Learning is such a Service to God and his Church, that 'tis scarce within the reach of any private Man's Charity to do a greater. For, tell me, who knoweth what a rare Man such a poor Child may prove hereafter ? Were it fit, it were but easie, to name some Persons, that have been choice Instruments of Honour to God, and Service to our Church, who in their Minority lived on Alms.

And if our bounty this day shall be placed on some such lucky Object, who can tell, but we may train up a Person of that Worth and Excellence, for whom the whole Nation may be obliged to bless both God and Us ? Perhaps a few Books, now bestowed on such a Child, may render him hereafter a walking Library ; a little Money, given him now, may make him Rich hereafter ; our Cap may be changed one day into a Mitre ; our Cloth may be turned into Sattin, and our Linnen may become Lawn-sleeves.

And methinks there is no sort of Men more obliged to this kind of Charity than We ; doubtless, we are more concerned to endeavour the promotion of Learning than other men ; this is the great Profession of that Famous University, which is the Glory of that County, whereunto we owe our birth. For, whereas other Counties Glory in such and such Commodities

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Commodities and Manufactures, 'tis Ours that Glorieth in Liberal Arts and Nobler Sciences. 'Tis the Glory of some Counties, that they can furnish the Chimnies of this vast City with constant fire, 'tis the Glory of other Counties, that they can furnish your River and Cisterns with constant Water; 'tis the Glory of some Shires, that they furnish your Shambles with Meat, and your Shops with Cloth; Well, and what's the Glory of our Shire? Hath *Oxford* nothing to oblige *London* with? Yes, 'tis our Counties Happines and Honour, that it can furnish your Inns of Court with Learned Lawyers to secure your Estates, your City with Learned Physicians to preserve your Lives; and, above all, your Pulpits with Learned Preachers to save your Souls: And if so, what Man amongst us, that hath any Value for himself or his Native soil, will not contribute something towards the Advancement of that Learning, wherein the Honour of his Country, and the safety of his own Estate, Life and Religion are so much concerned?

2. Such poor Children deserve to be recommended to your Charity this day, as are like to make Vertuous Men, and good Citizens too; if you train up some eminent Scholar, you will do an Honour to the place of your Birth; and if you breed up some eminent Citizen, you will much oblige the Place of your Habitation.

Past all peradventure, there's many a Child to be found, whose Natural Genius doth lead him rather to the Shop than to the Study; their

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Parts do very well dispose them for Mechanical Trades, but not at all for Nobler Arts; your Scarlet Gown may become that back, on which our black one would be ridiculous. 'Tis certain, that many a Child may make a Golden Lord Mayor, who would have made but a leaden Bishop.

And is it not a thousand pities to see such poor Children stand at the door and beg, who might have done so bravely within the Shop? Were it not pity to see such persons in Rags and Tatters, who, with a little help, might have worn a Chain of Gold? Were it not pity to see such become the Nations shame and burden, who, with a little encouragement, might have done a great deal towards its support and credit? To prevent such a spectacle as this, give me leave this day, in their stead, to become the Beggar, though I would not be the Receiver of your Charity, yet for once give me leave to ask it.

Doubtless, amongst the many poor Children of our County, 'tis easie to pick out some that are promising and hopefull, Lads of plodding heads and active hands; Lads, that might do far better in the Shop, than at the Plow. To place out such Lads as these, to find them Work and Wages; an honest Employment, a Religious Master, and a fitting Maintenance, is that great Act of Charity, which I would beg this day.

And for your Encouragement in this particular, do but remember, what brave Citizens have  
have

have already been made even of Alms-boys; to name Persons is needless, and would be unhandfom too. Only consider, what hath been the happy issue of other Mens Charity may as well be the blessed event of yours; who knoweth, but some poor Apprentice, trained up by the bounty of this day, and fed by your Feast of Charity, may prove a man of those Parts, that signal Prudence, Estate and Honour, as to become the Governour of this Great Metropolis? Who can tell, but a Lord Mayor of *London* may for once be made even at Drapers-Hall? there by your private Purfes now, and elsewhere by Common Votes hereafter?

But notwithstanding all this, lest any Man's Charity should yet prove more cold, than the very dish, that should receive it, give me leave to propound some proper considerations, that may revive, warm, and make it fresh; and that's the business of our third and last Particular:

3. Consider we what great Inducements man hath to be Charitable; give we must, and that considerably too, but what's our incouragement? surely, the greatest that can be; see what it is in Four Particulars:

1. The Commands of God do oblige us; Commands, that are expref, frequent and urgent too; so the Evangelist, *Be ye mercifull as your Heavenly Father is mercifull*; and so again, *Give to him that asketh*; and yet again, *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works, &c.* We cannot be uncharitable.

Luk. 6. 36.  
37.

Tim. 6. 17.

ritable to Man, but we must be disobedient to God too.

2. The Example of Christ doth much oblige us : *Learn of me*, saith our Blessed Saviour; but what must we learn? Certainly, amongst other Lessons this of Charity is one; so reasons great St. Paul, who presseth the *Corinthians* to Acts of Mercy by this very Motive; *Ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he were rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, &c.* So charitable was the Son of God, as for our sakes to give himself; and shall not we so far tread in his steps, as for his sake to give a trifle? But,

3. The great uncertainty of all Humane Affairs, the mutability of this World, and our own concerns therein, doth much oblige us; so various are the Providences of God, and so changeable is the condition of Man, that he, who is now in a fair capacity to extend his Charity unto others, may, in some short space, come to want and beg it for himself. 'Tis very possible, that a dishonest or careless Servant, a Thief, or a Fire by night, a storm, a Rock, or a Pirate by Sea, a crack and flaw in a Title, such or such a sad accident, which easily and frequently happens, may utterly undoe us. And if in such a case we should think our selves fit objects of other Men's Charity, 'tis but reasonable that we should now esteem that poor Neighbour, who is in a like condition, to be a meet Object for our own: So argueth the Great Apostle, *Remember them which*

Heb. 13. 2.

*which suffer adversity; but what's his Motive? as being your selves also in the body.* The Text imports, That so long as we are in this uncertain world, we are exposed to the self same dangers, losses and calamities with other men; and consequently we stand obliged to extend Mercy whilst we are able, as well as to expect it, when we are ruined.

4. Those great Rewards, which do attend our Charity, do much oblige us. That there is a Reward for the Charitable Person, our blessed Saviour doth thus secure him, *Thy Father himself shall reward thee;* the very lowest expressions of Charity God will not suffer to be unrewarded, *Whoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, he shall in no wise lose his reward:* 'Tis sure, a reward there is, but what an one is it? Is it such an one as will reimburse, recompense, and make us amends for what we part with? Yea, the Rewards of our Charity are of Two sorts, Temporal and Eternal: What are these Temporal Rewards, we may see distinctly in Four Particulars;

1. The Rewards of our Charity are such as concern the safety and welfare of our Persons: What is the Charitable Man's Privilege in this respect, the Psalmist tells us, *The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble: The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive: The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, &c.* The Text imports, that the welfare of our Persons is much concerned in the right ordering of  
of.



of our Purfes; the way to fecure our health, and sweeten our ficknefs, is to Fee, not fo much the Phyfician, as the Poor.

2. The Rewards of our Charity are fuch as concern our common credit and reputation in the world: For although our Bleffed Saviour forbids us to make our own honour and applaufe the design of our Charity, yet the iffue and event thereof it will be. *Solomon* tells us, Prov. 10. 7. *The memory of the Juft fhall be bleffed*: This Juft Man is the man of Mercy, the fame man Pfal. 112. 9. that *David* fpeaks of, *He hath difperfed, he hath given to the poor*: What then? *His Righteoufnefs endures for ever, his Horn fhall be exalted with honour*: The beft way to eternize our memories is to be exemplary in doing good; *Do good, and dwell for evermore*. 'Tis Charity that Embalms a Man's name, and keeps it frefh and sweet for ever; there's no Tomb like an Alms-house, no Monument like an Hofpital, no Marble like the Poor Man's Box.

3. The Rewards of our Charity are fuch as concern our prefent Interelt and Eftates even in this world: 'Tis one of *Solomon's* feeming Paradoxes, Prov. 11. 24. *There is that fcattereth, and yet increafeth*: But who is this lucky Man? the next Verfe tells us, *The liberal Soul fhall be made fat, and he that watereth fhall be watered again*. A little water poured into a Pump, fetcheth more; and a little money put into the poor Man's Purfe, doth often bring much greater fums into our own. There is no man fo good an Husband even for this world, as the man of Mercy;



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Mercy; nor doth any person prove so sure a gainer, as he that gives; see that Command and Promise of Christ; *Give, and it shall be given unto you*; but how much, and in what quantity? good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Money rightly bestowed is not lost, but rather lent out to use; 'tis like Seed, scattered indeed here and there, but yet it groweth and multiplies even to admiration. St. Paul tells us, *He that sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully*: Indeed, a common sower may possibly over-seed his Ground, and by a lavish hand spoil his Crop; but in our Case there is no danger; the more Seed we can spare and sow, the richer Harvest shall we reap.

4. The Rewards of our Charity are such as concern our Posterity too: Thus the Psalmist, *He is ever mercifull and lendeth*; there's the property of a Charitable Man; but what's his reward? *His Seed is blessed*: And thus some expound that forenamed expression of Solomon, *The Memory of the Just shall be blessed*: The Memory! what's that? the Child, the Son that bears his Fathers Name, and keeps it up and alive in the world; this Son shall be blessed, this Child shall be so far from being injured by his Fathers Charity, that it shall rather tend to his great advantage. And surely this consideration doth totally remove that vain pretence and scruple of men, who are afraid to do any considerable acts of Charity, lest thereby they impoverish their Families, and leave their Children beggars: But

Psalm. 37. 26.

Prov. 10. 7.

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2. There are such Rewards of our Charity, as concern another world ; Our Saviour tells us, *Blessed are the mercifull* : He doth not mean in this life only, but in the next. 'Tis in order to this, that he thus commands us, *Make to your selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations* : and upon the same score he tells us, *He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophets reward* : but what's that ? certainly, 'tis a Reward in Heaven.

And that we may not doubt the certainty of these great Rewards, and so our Charity grow chill : *Solomon* tells us what security we have, and who it is that stands engaged ; *He that hath pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he repay* : That we may be encouraged to supply the poor Mans wants, God himself hath drawn a Bond, and offers himself to be the poor Mans Surety, and the rich Man's Debtor.

And can our Charity expect any greater encouragement than this ? It's true, when such or such a Man would borrow, perhaps we suspect his Honesty, perhaps we suspect his Ability, perhaps we are jealous of his Security, and that makes us loth to lend ; but doth the Case stand so with God ? When God would be our Debtor, do we think, that he will not be our Paymaster too ? Is not he to be trusted, that is faithful, just and true ? Is not he to be credited for a few pence or shillings, who is Lord of all that Heaven

( 27 )

Heaven and Earth are worth? 'Tis for security's sake, that our blessed Saviour doth thus command us, *Lay up for your selves treasures in Heaven*: the Text imports, that Money given the poor is not idly spent, but secured in the Treasury of God, and Exchequer of Heaven: And although the Most Just and best Natured Earthly Prince may sometimes be constrained by a necessity of State, and against his own inclinations, to shut up his Exchequer; yet can we imagine that the Great God of Heaven will ever put a stop to his Treasury, and the Bankers and Creditors there ruined too? &c. We think great Summs sure enough in the Chamber of London, and dare we not venture some small matter in the Star-Chamber of Heaven? Doubtless our Principal will be safe, and our Interest both sure and great; if there be a Reward for the most inconsiderable Alms, even a cup of cold water, O what Reward will there be for higher Acts of Charity! Our Saviour tells us, *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, Mat. 25. 35. thirsty, and ye gave me drink, &c.* Well, and what then? what's the Reward of this? a great one sure! *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, &c.* Dear Lord! here's Principal and Interest indeed! a little meat given, and a Kingdom received! a little drink lent, and a Crown repaid! a little cloth bestowed, and a Throne returned! Yea, here's the fruit of Charity; what the poor borroweth, God payeth over and over; well may *Tertullian* tells us, *Lucrum est Pietatis nomine facere sumptum; to* Text. Apol. cap. 39. *give*

Give thus and thus to pious uses is to gain; to give so and so to the Poor, is to become a Sacred Usurer; because whatever man thus gives, God refunds, yea, God repayeth for every penny a pound, and for every mite a talent: And if so, if our Feast this day shall prove like the Feasts in my Text, a Feast of mutual Love amongst our selves, and a Feast of Charity to such as deserve and want it; we shall find a friend in Heaven, that will do more than pay our Reckoning.

Δόξα Θεῷ

THE END.

